

# Communication Plan



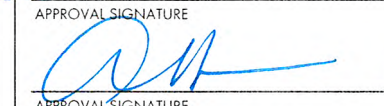
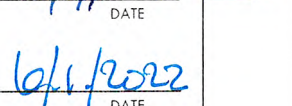
Los Alamos County  
Communications & Public Relations

June 1, 2022 (presented to Council: March 8, 2022)



LOS ALAMOS



	
APPROVAL SIGNATURE	DATE
	
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CPR Mgr: Julie Williams 6/1/22

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Communication and Public Relations' Mission

Proactively inform, educate, and involve citizens and employees about County projects, policies, and goals while enhancing the image of our county government. Promote a culture of open communication and collaboration to foster exceptional customer service.

### Plan

For purposes of updating the 2015 Los Alamos County Communications Plan (Plan) the Communication and Public Relations (CPR) staff will focus on two objectives: 1) **Enhancing communication to better inform and engage the public on County matters and to better interface with regional, state, and national entities**, and 2) Improving certain metrics on **inclusivity** and **engagement** in the 2020 National Community Survey Report<sup>TM</sup>. Through open communication implemented in a timely and effective manner, the Plan aims to promote a better understanding of County services, initiatives, and resources with Los Alamos County citizens. *Other audiences such as developers, potential new businesses, and tourists may require different messages, strategies and tools based on other priorities and objectives. These audiences and communication strategies will be discussed in other plans as appropriate.*

To realize these objectives the Plan will implement the following eight strategies:

1. ***Incorporate Council priorities into communication efforts:*** Educate and inform residents to understand why and how public policy decisions are made, and why and how County officials implement actions.
  - 1) ***Inform County employees:*** Inform employees to disseminate consistent messages that inform the public on county services, initiatives, efforts, goals, and priorities.
  - 2) ***Build relationships and maintain regular communications with partners and stakeholders:*** Interface with public information officers representing local organizations and regional, state and national entities. Build relationships and trust with local reporters through regular communications.
  - 3) ***Facilitate public engagement:*** Use interactive communication approaches to maintain an ongoing dialogue between citizens and the County government.
  - 4) ***Build community trust:*** Build trust between the County and its citizens by proactively disclosing information on the website, in the media, and on social media.
  - 5) ***Social media strategies:*** Revise the County's Facebook Policy with a more robust Social Media Policy that incorporates multiple platforms, facilitates one-to-one and one-to-many engagement and increases the County's social media presence.

- 6) **Reinforce branding:** Expand branding efforts to strengthen the County’s unity, visibility, and credibility; this is the County’s recognizable reputation based on its quality of services, customer service, initiatives, and accountability.
- 7) **Metrics:** Measure and track appropriate metrics to assess the effectiveness of the Plan and revise annually to improve.

First objective: On February 8, 2022, the County Council adopted the [2022 County Council Strategic Leadership Plan](#). **Enhancing communication to better inform and engage the public on County matters and to better interface with regional, state, and national entities** is the first of seven strategic priorities and four cross-cutting goals identified by the Council to address challenging issues important to the community support. A well-executed communication strategy should support and enhance the remaining six strategic priorities and cross cutting goals.

Second objective: To assist the CPR staff in enhancing **communication** to engage the community on County services, the CPR staff turned to the 2020 [National Community Survey™](#) (The NCS™) developed by National Research Center, Inc. This survey assessed ten facets of community livability in the County as it relates to quality of life. Citizens’ responses were benchmarked to gauge perception of these facets as lower, similar, or of higher **quality** than perceptions from other communities across the nation. Citizens’ **importance** for each of these facets was then categorized into lower, similar or of higher importance than other communities.

The graph on the following page is from The NCS™ Report. Survey results were placed in a matrix to assist the County to determine where to prioritize resources. Facets in the lower quality/higher importance section of the matrix (upper left) are the most urgent to address. In contrast, facets in the higher quality/lower importance (bottom right) section of the matrix would imply citizens are receiving quality services and needs are being met – this is the desired square in the matrix.

To improve communication, this Plan aims to move the facet “Inclusivity and Engagement,” which addresses residents’ perception of connection and engagement with their community from similar quality/lower importance to higher quality/lower importance. While **communication** supports the other nine facets rated by citizens in the survey, the primary focus of these facets was on other priorities. Rather, Los Alamos citizens provided opinions on the economy, mobility, community design, utilities, safety, natural environment, parks and recreation, health and wellness and education, arts and culture.

Image below taken from [the NCS™ Report page 4](#) (green shading, red circle and arrow added for clarification).

		QUALITY		
		LOWER	SIMILAR	HIGHER
IMPORTANCE	HIGHER			
	SIMILAR		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Economy</li><li>• Community Design</li><li>• Utilities</li><li>• Parks and Recreation</li><li>• Health and Wellness</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Natural Environment</li></ul>
	LOWER		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Education, Arts and Culture</li><li>• Mobility</li><li>• Inclusivity and Engagement</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Safety</li></ul>

## 2020 COMMUNITY SURVEY

### NCS™ Comparison Survey

In 2020 the National Research Center, Inc. conducted a National Community Survey™ (NCS™) to gauge community members’ perception on the desirability of living in Los Alamos County. Of relevance for this Plan the CPR team looked at specific metrics within the “**Governance**,” and “**Inclusivity and Engagement**” sections that aligned with communication and engagement.

### Key Take Aways

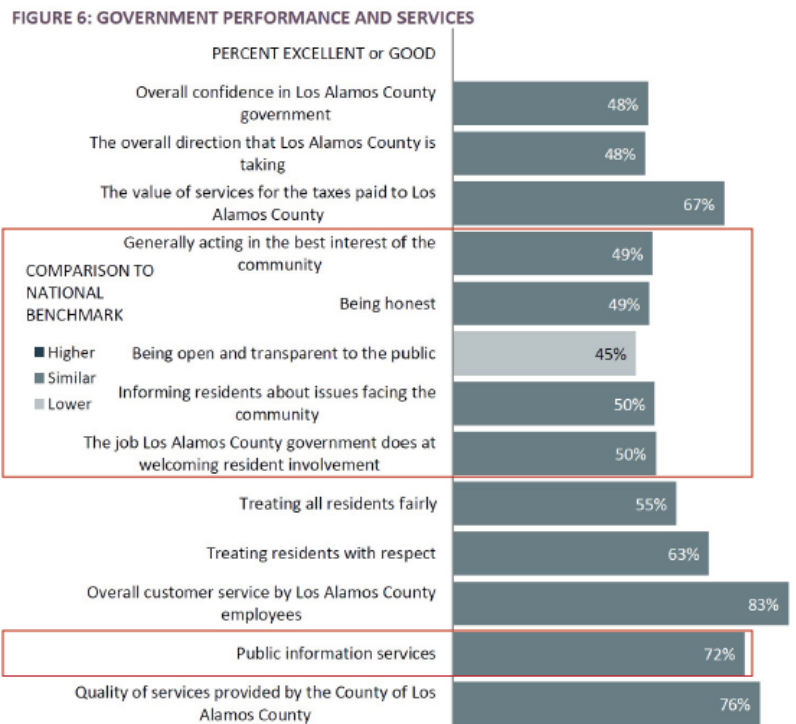
To gauge citizen perception of how effectively the County communicates, the CPR team looked at metrics identified in the “**Governance**” section associated with good communication and trust: Honesty, transparency, information, involvement, and public information services.

The survey results indicate that less than 50 percent of Los Alamos residents rated the County as excellent or good when it comes to acting in the best interest of the community, being honest, and being open and transparent. Fifty percent said the County does an excellent or good job in informing them about issues and welcoming resident involvement.

Seventy-two percent indicated that the public information services provided by the County are excellent or good.

Although the majority of these areas are still within the “similar” range of national benchmarks, this communication plan aims to promote and improve trust by clearly defining department services on the website, proactively informing, making documents available to the public, and soliciting and welcoming feedback (discussed on page 20).

Figure 6 (right) is found on [page 7 of the NCS Report](#) (red box added for clarification)



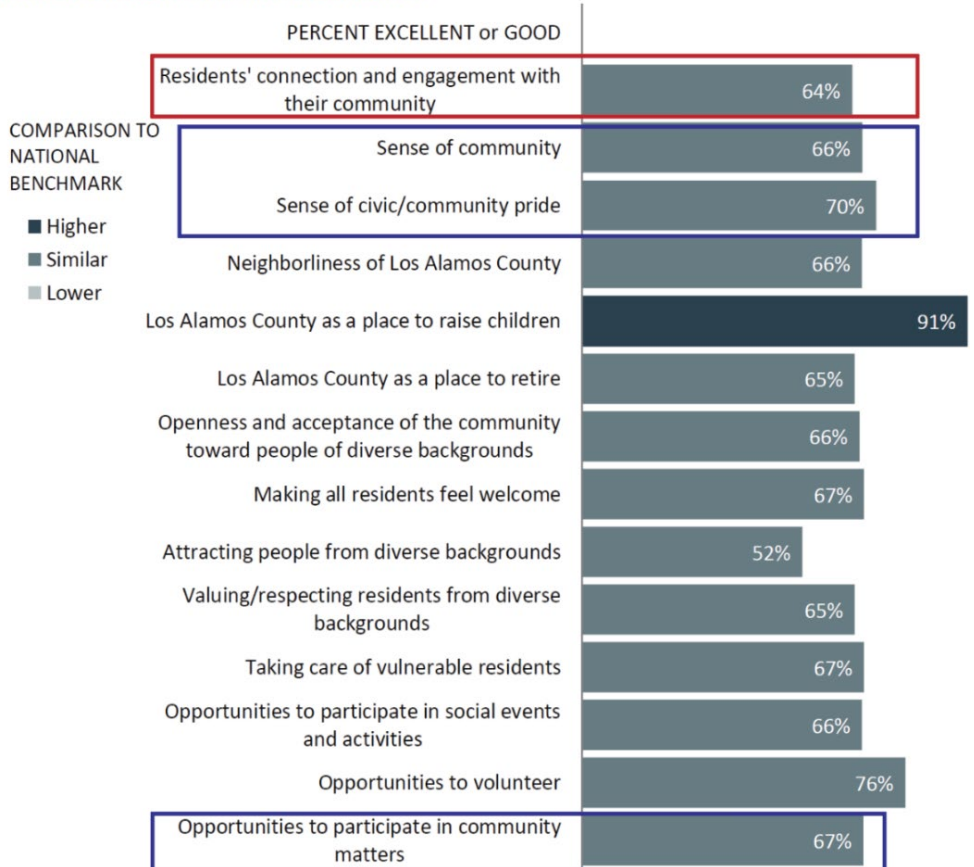
To assess the County’s effectiveness to engage the public on county matters the CPR team reviewed the “**Inclusivity and Engagement**” section of the NCS™ report, homing in on four metrics detailing citizens perceptions about engaging with the County: Connection and engagement, sense of community, sense of pride and opportunities to participate in community matters.

**Inclusivity and engagement:** According to the NCS™ report, “[i]nclusivity refers to a cultural and environmental feeling of belonging; residents who feel invited to participate within their communities feel more included, involved, and engaged than those who do not.” Results from the survey suggest that the majority (64 percent) of Los Alamos citizens felt an excellent or good **connection and engagement** with their community (red box below in figure 32). As for “community” and “civic/community pride,” 66 percent and 70 percent rated this as excellent or good, respectively and 67 percent rated “opportunities to participate in community matters,” as excellent or good (identified in blue boxes below in figure 32).

This Plan will focus on improving engagement by actively promoting two-way communication and providing opportunities for citizen involvement and participation (detailed on page 19).

Figure 32 is taken from the NCS™ [Report on page 24](#). (right – red and blue boxes added for clarification).

**FIGURE 32: INCLUSIVITY AND ENGAGEMENT**

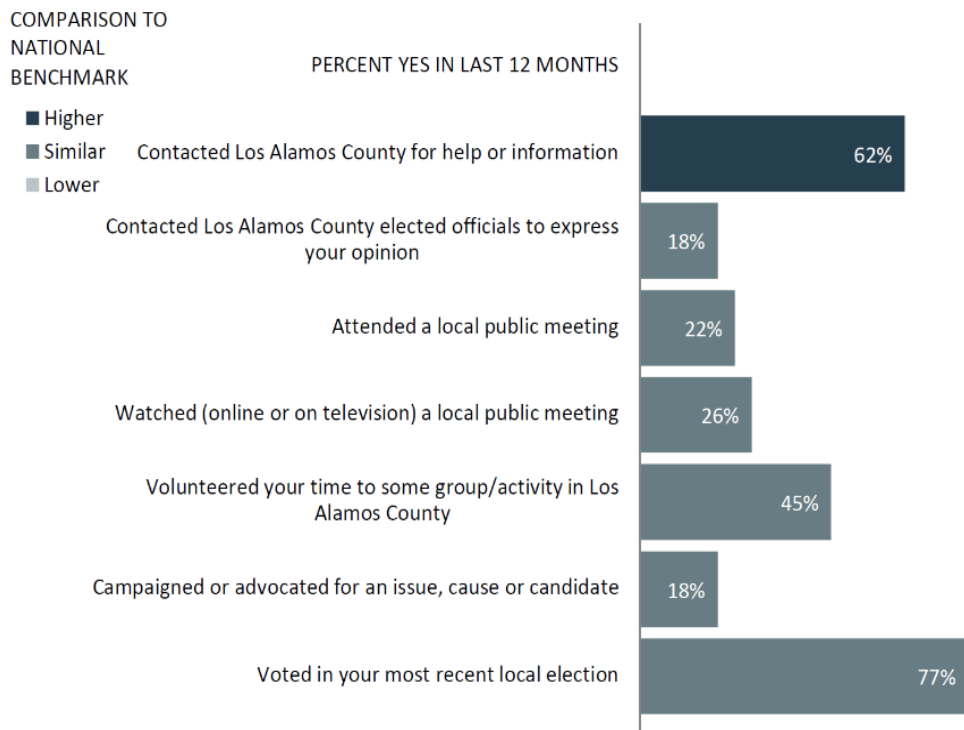


The CPR team also analyzed the section of the NCS™ report that measured residents’ “**Participation levels.**” While residents said opportunities to participate in community matters was high at 67 percent, actual participation levels in County government in the last 12 months (based on the date the survey was conducted) was low. Citizen responses ranged from 18 to 26 percent when asked if they contacted an elected official, attended a local public meeting, watched a local public meeting, campaigned, or advocated for an issue, cause, or candidate. (See figure 34 below)

This Plan will focus on exploring options to make participation easier in County government (discussed on page 19).

*The following figure 34 (below) is taken from [page 26 of the NCS Report](#).*

**FIGURE 34: RESIDENTS’ PARTICIPATION LEVELS**





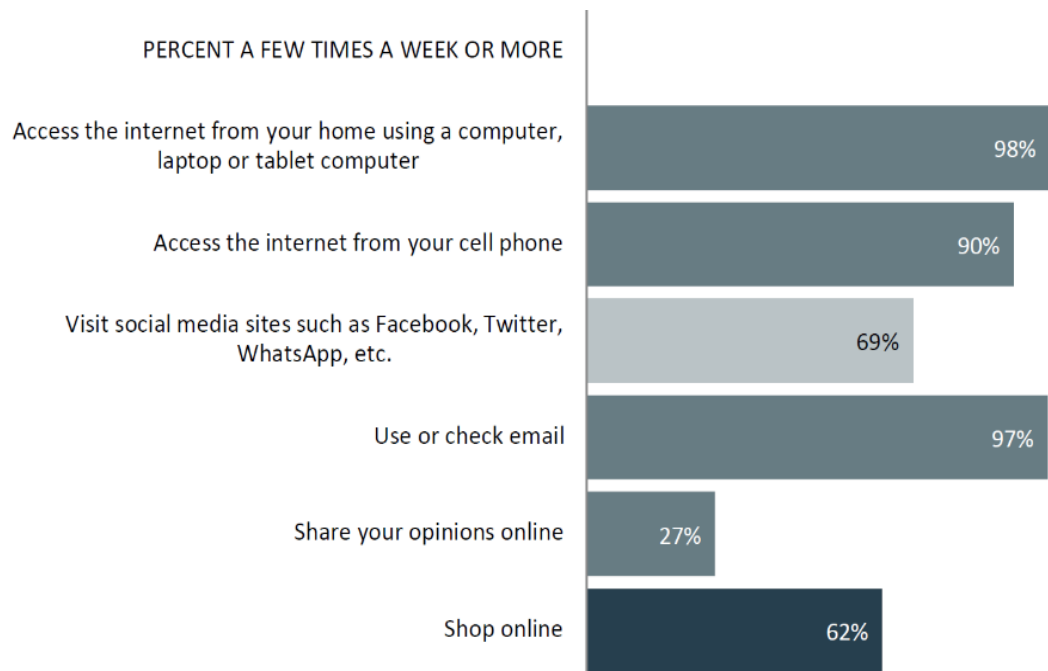
Lastly, the CPR team looked at the section of the NCS™ Report that identified the general use of technology among county residents. This effort was to identify how the CPR team can leverage certain platforms to better communicate and engage with citizens.

**Residents’ General Use of Technology:** The NCS™ Report indicates (see figure below) that 90+ percent of Los Alamos residents access the internet from a computer, laptop, tablet or cell phone and use email a few times a week or more. Only 27 percent indicate they share opinions online a few times a week or more.

Interestingly, Social Media participation is lower than the national benchmark. However, at 69 percent it shouldn’t be discounted as an opportunity for the County to reach and engage citizens.

Based on these results, there are opportunities for the County to enhance and improve engagement with citizens through the website, MyCivic 311 and Tyler Notify apps, e-newsletters, and social media.

*The following is a continuation of figure 34 (below) found on [page 26 of the NCS™ Report](#) and depicted on page 27.*



## **ROLE OF COMMUNICATIONS & PUBLIC RELATIONS TEAM**

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The role of the Communication and Public Relations (CPR) team is to support the Council, County Manager and County departments to establish, nurture, and sustain a high level of trust in Los Alamos County government among residents, businesses, and other key stakeholders. The objective is to maintain the County's organizational integrity and positive brand reputation through a cohesive, professional, strategic communication effort that includes high-quality products (publications, graphics, video, etc.).

### **Support to Council and County Manager and Senior Staff**

CPR staff provides communication advisory support to the County Manager, senior staff and Council as needed regarding media queries, crises, interview and any other communications-related needs. The CPR team will prepare and distribute talking points on various topics as needed to keep the staff and Council on message to best represent the County. In addition, CPR staff will provide speech-writing support, as requested for official county-related activities.

### **Support to County departments**

CPR team assists County departments to develop and implement communication strategies to promote a better understanding of County services, initiatives, and resources within the community. Support includes assistance with media relations, advertising, printing and graphic design, video, event planning and brand management.

### **Messaging:**

CPR staff supports the County to share timely, accurate, important, and relevant information to the individuals the County serves. When developing campaigns and communications, the CPR staff will work with appropriate County employees to identify the:

**Audience and Context** (Exhibit A) – Who is the target audience and how do they stay informed and what is important to them?

**Outcome** – What is the desired outcome of the communication? (Informing, educating, involving, calling to action, instructional, encouraging, etc.)

**Message** (Exhibit B) – What is the right message that helps to align and integrate the overall County goals and priorities, instill trust, provide clear, factual, effective, and timely information that is useful and engages the citizen, anticipate audience questions and proactively provide answers, and ensure the message adequately covers the Who, What, Where, When, Why and How.

**Timing** – When should the message be disseminated to ensure that information is relevant, and the recipient of the message can act appropriately?

**Communication Channel** (Exhibit C) – Where will the message be distributed so that it reaches the specific audience? Use the communication vehicle(s) that is(are) most effective in reaching and targeting this audience.

**Listening Mechanisms** (Exhibit D) – How can the County listen to the audience to be able to adjust messages, outreach, communication channels if necessary? By providing listening mechanisms for interested parties to ask questions, provide feedback or engage, CPR staff to better able to realize the desired outcome.

### **Social Media/Sustainable Focus**

As many traditional forms of communication, such as published daily newspapers, radio stations and movie theaters, are vanishing, the conversation is shifting to social media platforms. It is an inexpensive method to share content (messages) that can reach specific audiences immediately with a smaller carbon footprint. In addition, Digital communications via social media support the County’s sustainable initiatives by reducing material that is eventually transported to landfills or even recycling centers.

Developing content for various social media platforms that effectively engages the audience and relays the intended message will require an increased demand for digital graphics and video from the CPR team. As a result, the CPR team is revising its social media policy, ramping up video capabilities, and researching engagement strategies.

### **Meetings**

Communications and Public Relations division (weekly)

County Manager staff meetings (every two weeks)

Senior Management Team meeting (weekly)

Expanded Management Team meeting (monthly)

Media meetings: LA Daily Post and Los Alamos Reporter (biweekly)

## CPR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

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Presently the CPR Division, comprising a staff of three, is structured with one Communication and Public Relations Administrator and two Visual Information Specialists. A gap in the division structure is a job position that allows for the readiness and responsibility for an employee to serve as the acting CPR Administrator, especially in the event of an emergency or succession planning. Additionally, several local organizations that were part of the County's communication strategies have folded over the past years: The Los Alamos Monitor, Reel Deal Movie Theater and KRSN Radio. Staff is looking to fill the void as public service announcement videos at the movie theater, live interviews with county officials and advertisements on the radio are no longer available.

To better understand the CPR Divisions' ability to support the County's communication efforts, it needs to evaluate the county's workload, needs, and priorities in coordination with existing job descriptions and partner positions in other divisions. A revised organizational structure may be needed to strengthen the CPR Division's ability to implement this Communication Plan with enhanced, proactive communications, branding, and expanded social media engagement to include graphics and video content.

### ACTIVE POLICIES

The following policies are currently under the purview of the CPR Division and are scheduled to be reviewed annually with appropriate stakeholders and updated or revised as necessary:

- Website Management Policy: The new website project is in negotiations and is anticipated to launch in 2023. The website policy will need to be updated to include additional web users trained in best practices.
- Facebook Policy: The CPR Division will update this policy to include management of other social media platforms, engagement with the public, and the creation and implementation of social media campaigns. A policy could be developed by July 2022, followed by department social media users training.
- Branding: Branding Style Guide, Training and materials. CPR staff will schedule annual refresher courses for users by June 2022.
- Emergency Public Information Plan – Emergency Operation Center/Joint Information Center: An annual review and update of the policy will begin in May 2022 and will include all relevant stakeholders.

### ACTIVE PLANS

- Communication Plan
- Brand Action Plan

- Los Alamos Tourism Strategic Plan (Feb. 27, 2018)
- Economic Vitality Strategic Plan (May. 28, 2019)

#### ACTIVE CONTRACTS

- Website Management Contract: The new website project is in negotiations and is anticipated to launch in 2023. The website policy will need to be updated to include additional web users trained in best practices.
- On-Call Video Production Services: A request for proposals to assist with the county's increased demand for video productions was issued in January 2022. Contract expected to be awarded in March 2022.
- PAC-8 Broadcasting Contract: This is a seven-year contract that expires in 2027.
- Constant Contact (e-newsletters)
- Surveys (including the NRC™ Report and employee surveys)

#### FORMS & TEMPLATES

- Branding: Branding templates for letterhead, business cards, etc.
- Public Information and involvement Plan (template)
- County Manager Office Monthly Report (template)

## **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION/STRATEGY**

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**Strategic Communication Planning Process** – Take every opportunity to educate the community on County services, initiatives and Council goals and priorities. CPR will implement this Plan by focusing on the following eight initiatives (described in further detail on the following pages):

1. Incorporate Council priorities into communication efforts
2. Ensure the County has well informed employees
3. Build relationships and maintain regular communication with other stakeholders
4. Facilitate public engagement
5. Build trust in the community
6. Grow the County's social media presence
7. Reinforce brand identity
8. Review, update and measure progress and success

## 1. INCORPORATE COUNCIL PRIORITIES INTO COMMUNICATION EFFORTS

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By routinely incorporating Council goals and priorities into outgoing communications, the County staff can help inform residents on how county services, actions and public policy decisions support the Strategic Leadership Plan.

CPR staff will clearly and consistently incorporate Council goals and priorities in thoughtful, essential, and effective communications. CPR staff will: 1) Prominently display them on the County website (home page as well as department pages); and 2) Integrate them into internal and external messages and communications. This coordination ensures consistency, strengthens strategic message delivery, and enhances citizens' understanding of how county government is working for them.

1. **Meet monthly with Department Communication Designees:** Currently, each County department has a different staff member designated by the department director (Designee) who independently communicates and coordinates messages to the public (issuing press releases, advertisements, media interviews, etc.). CPR staff will formalize meetings with Designees once a month to strategize, collaborate, and coordinate consistent and cohesive messaging. This can include written documents, advertisements, printed materials, etc. Council goals and priorities will be incorporated into core communications that are issued regularly and articulate how County services support these efforts. CPR staff and Designees will also educate the community on services provided by partner organizations, such as the Juvenile Justice Advisory Board, Los Alamos Historical Society, NMSU Cooperative Extension Office, Pajarito Environmental Education Center, Teen Center and others. As each County department and partner organization has a different mission, vision, and audience, this collaboration will also assist in reaching different segments of the community.
2. **Include Goals and Priorities on the website:** The webpage is the first place the public visits to learn about County services, initiatives, programs, projects and Council goals and priorities. Presently the Council goals and priorities are located at the bottom of the Council webpage. CPR staff will make the goals and priorities more prominent on the County website. Starting with the home page, CPR staff will then coordinate with the department Designees to thread the goals and priorities throughout the various department pages.

Incidentally, the County's existing web hosting contract is expiring. The County is currently negotiating with a vendor to host, redesign, and enhance the County website to incorporate the

latest technology to make the site more transactional and mobile-friendly for the web user. Once a contract is awarded this will be a top priority for CPR staff.

3. **Social Media Campaigns:** The CPR staff is committed to increase the County's social media presence and will work with Designees to coordinate and create social media campaigns and content to educate the community on the County's services and the services of its partner organizations. These campaigns can also be created to demonstrate how County initiatives and Council goals and priorities benefit the community. Increasing citizen engagement on social media is two-fold as it can assist in a better understanding of the county government services, but also increase the County's presence on these social media platforms.



## **2. ENSURE THE COUNTY HAS WELL INFORMED EMPLOYEES**

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County employees informed on county initiatives, efforts, Council goals and priorities help disseminate and repeat consistent messages to the public. They are an essential component of the Communication Plan. Every interaction a staff member has with a citizen is an opportunity to educate and inform the public, whether it is through email, a phone call, written publications, or face-to-face interactions.

County employees want to be helpful and provide good information the public. Working together with each department's Designees, CPR staff will ensure that information flows to employees through internal communication channels and resources. Employees who know where they can obtain information and who they can talk to, generally provide exceptional customer service. Moreover, employees interacting with citizens are often the first to recognize a troubling issue or identify a trend that may require County attention. Strong two-way internal communication structures provide safeguards that for the County to be able to respond quickly.

CPR staff will provide resources such as guidelines and materials (templates, frequently asked questions, etc.) to help promote best practices in communicating with the public, focusing on timeliness, factual, and valuable information. Moreover, CPR staff will continue to support all the departments' communication needs following the rest of the Plan while assisting with branding, high-quality graphics, printed materials as required to facilitate communication.

As a practice, all departments and divisions should share information, events, and initiatives with other employees and County departments to maintain consistent messages with the community.

### 3. BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND MAINTAIN REGULAR COMMUNICATIONS WITH PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

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Los Alamos County is fortunate because it is a small community and can build relationships and maintain regular communications with a variety of partners and stakeholders. Interfacing with public information officers representing local organizations and regional, state and national entities provides opportunities for the County and other entities to share initiatives, projects, goals, and priorities; look for possible opportunities to collaborate; and listen and gather feedback.

The other important stakeholder in any community is the local newspaper. Local reporters hold county officials accountable and are valuable partners in keeping citizens informed and engaged. Unfortunately, local news organizations across the nation are disappearing, for which Los Alamos County is not exempt. In past years, it has lost the local KRSN radio station and the printed Los Alamos Monitor newspaper. Fortunately, two digital media publications, Los Alamos Daily Post (also published weekly) and the Los Alamos Reporter, continue to provide reliable news daily to the community. Maintaining regular communications with local reporters builds trust between CPR staff and Designees to share important information about the county and to get a different perspective on citizen perceptions.

1. **Meet quarterly with Public Information Officers representing local, regional, state and national entities:** Meetings may include public information officers from the Los Alamos Public Schools, Los Alamos Medical Center, University of New Mexico – Los Alamos, Los Alamos Chamber of Commerce, various State Departments, City of Espanola, City of Santa Fe, neighboring Tribes, Los Alamos National Laboratory, Department of Energy, N3B, and the National Parks Service. The purpose of meeting with other key government and professional communicators in an informal setting is to network and build solid relationships. This is helpful to share current issues, initiatives, projects, topics of concern that may affect others and look for opportunities to partner. Moreover, during a crisis, the County can better coordinate accordingly and appropriately with its communication counterparts as these working relationships have already been forged.
2. **Meet biweekly with the media:** County CPR staff and Designees meet with reporters from the Los Alamos Daily Post and Los Alamos Reporter every other week to build trust, share important County initiatives, projects, services and events. CPR staff and Designees also answer reporter questions, follow up on requested information and listen to what reporters are stating are matters of interest and concern for citizens.

#### 4. FACILITATE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

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According to the NCSTM Report, “residents who feel invited to participate within their communities feel more included, involved, and engaged than those who do not.” Los Alamos County and the Council understand the value of engaging its citizens to better understand the community's needs and values and establish greater collaboration for decision-making. Sixty-seven percent of County residents in the 2020 NCS™ Report perceived that there were opportunities to engage and participate in County government. However, only 22 percent of these citizens attended a public meeting and 18 percent campaigned or advocated for an issue or cause.

Los Alamos County currently uses several tools to engage citizens, for example, citizen committees, Open Forum, surveys, focus groups, email, public meetings, and townhalls. In response to the Coronavirus Pandemic, Los Alamos County also added virtual government meetings and town halls, while other department Designees began live-streaming some events on Facebook. The virtual format for meetings made it easier for some citizens to get involved. Moving forward, the County should consider continuing when possible, offering virtual/hybrid options for government meetings to increase participation. Also, the MyCivic 311 and Tyler Notify applications from Tyler Munis purchased this past year are currently being implemented. These Customer Relationship Management tools will assist the Customer Care Center and other county staff to track citizen communications and nurture those relationships.

The CPR staff and Designees will continue to use interactive communication approaches and explore other options to maintain an ongoing dialogue between the community and the County government. "Call to action" messages may also be elevated with appealing graphics and images to inspire citizens to respond. As each communication is different, the CPR staff and Designees will refer to Exhibits A, B, C and D to determine appropriate target audiences, messaging, communication channels, listening mechanisms or tools to make it easier for residents to engage.

## 5. BUILD TRUST IN THE COMMUNITY

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According to the NCS™ Report, the County can do more to build trust in the community. Specifically, there is room for the County to improve the citizen perception that the County is acting in the community's best interest, being honest, being open, informing residents about issues facing the community, and welcoming resident involvement.

Theoretically, government organizations that are transparent and responsive to constituents build better understanding and trust. However, transparency can also lead to confusion and result in distrust if it is not easily understood. Therefore, government officials' focus should be "comprehensive in the sense that it touches upon the issues necessary to understand the actions taken by the government" when disclosing information to the public. (Porumbescu).

An example might be the County's disclosure that arsenic is in the drinking water at 4 parts per billion (ppb). Without context that the Environmental Protection Agency conducted extensive studies to determine a safe, acceptable level of arsenic in water, and 4 ppb is well below that level, a citizen might conclude that bottled water is safer than tap water. Yet, several brands of bottled water have arsenic levels higher than 4 ppb. Since bottled water companies are not required to disclose this on the product packaging, citizens will place trust elsewhere, without the necessary information to draw a different conclusion.

When addressing trust, the method by which citizens obtain government information can also color their perceptions. Laws designed to promote government transparency can have the opposite effect on the public. Studies indicate trust is not enhanced when information is disclosed to the public resulting from a Freedom of Information request (or in the case of Los Alamos, a request to Inspect Public Records). In contrast, a "strong relationship between citizens' use of e-government," can change perceptions of local government responsiveness and trustworthiness. In other words, information that is accessible on a government website, that clearly explains the role of government and how it responds and meets the needs of its citizens to improve "quality of life," better influences trust levels with citizens. (Porumbescu)

This Plan will address residents' responses in the NCS™ Report to build a trusting relationship between the County and its citizens. The below is not to say that the County has not already implemented these approaches rather, the CPR staff and communication designees will look for additional ways to improve or enhance these efforts.

1. **Website:** The County is in the process of updating its website. While the staff is still in negotiations, the successful vendor will assist the County in designing the new site using best practices for easy, intuitive navigation and usability. County services and key **plans, studies, and surveys** should be effortless to find on the new site. In addition, to maintain the new site's look and feel, the County designated web publishers will participate in training to learn how to create citizen-centric content.
2. **Sunshine more:** Be proactive in making documents public. When appropriate, the county web publishers will make records available on the website and to the media with clear explanations of the actions taken by the County and why.
3. **Proactive:** When appropriate, the CPR staff and Designees will be proactive to educate the community on issues that may affect citizens. This can be done on the website, social media, press releases, or other channels.
4. **Solicit and welcome feedback:** CPR staff and Designees will listen to and solicit feedback from citizens when appropriate. Additionally, staff will be respectful, courteous, and professional when responding.
  1. Respond appropriately and courteously. Not responding can give the impression that citizen opinions are ignored. Multiple channels are available to listen to the community.

## 6. GROW THE COUNTY'S SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

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Currently, many County departments manage separate Facebook pages to amplify department press releases or messages. A few departments manage Instagram, Twitter, or NextDoor accounts. Some coordination occurs when one County department may request another County department to share a post to increase reach. On occasion, a Facebook post may also be shared on some of the local private or public Facebook community pages such as “Shop Local Los Alamos” or “White Rock NM Community,” again, to boost reach.

The County’s Facebook Policy was developed in 2011 and adopted in 2019. The approach was consistent with other communities in 2011, which was to create a static page, providing information to citizens and directing them to the website with minimal engagement. For example, Facebook direct messaging is discouraged in the County’s current Policy. However, in the current social media culture, citizens expect to engage on various platforms, including with their governments. Subsequently, hundreds of government agencies, including the New Mexico Governor, New Mexico Department of Health, American Red Cross, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, are “embracing social media as a customer service tool that encourages one-on-one and one-to-many engagement and, more importantly, to address concerns and solve problems. Social media has become for many the standard currency of government communication.” (Hsiung)

As the NCS™ Report found that 69 percent of County citizens are on social media two or more times a week, the CPR staff and Designees have a significant opportunity to improve the quality, presence, and engagement with citizens on social media. The County is lagging in its efforts to utilize and develop a comprehensive approach to engage its citizens on various social media platforms.

1. Replace the Facebook Policy with a comprehensive social media policy by April 2022. This will require additional research and participation in webinars/workshops to develop a flexible policy to meet the needs of the County departments and citizens, comply with legal requirements, and adhere to records retention laws.
2. Generate and provide annual training and education to understand best practices to engage and develop social media campaigns on each chosen platform for CPR staff Designees. Couple messages with colorful, eye-catching graphics, photos, video, live-streaming to promote the County brand and pique citizen interest.
3. Incorporate social media advertising or “boosting” to target specific audiences.

4. Subscribe to social media management and scheduling programs/software to create efficiency, consistency, and better manage campaigns.
5. Collaborate with other department communication designees to coordinate social media messaging and campaigns.

## REINFORCE BRAND IDENTITY

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While branding in the private sector is about making a profit, branding for government organizations is about building trust. By using a consistent voice, messaging, citizen experience, and logo, the county government builds and maintains a recognizable reputation based on its quality of services, customer service, initiatives, and accountability. (Blumenthal)

Specific objectives of government branding are as follows:

- **Unity:** A branded initiative shows a unity of purpose across county services, providing a consistent voice and cohesion between county departments. It allows the citizens to know what to expect.
- **Visibility:** Public recognition and recall improves when linking county-funded services, initiatives, and programs with consistent use of the logo, font style and brand colors.
- **Credibility:** The clear identification of quality services, and superior customer service to a government brand will develop credibility and trust. (Reghunathan)

To establish a professional and quality County presence, the County successfully rolled out in 2016 a new logo, strapline, Identity Style Guide, and training program to teach employees and contractors how and when to use branding tools.

CPR staff will expand on this success to also promote unity, visibility, and credibility, in the following ways:

- Continue to empower and train employees and contractors (with annual refresher courses) to use the County brand and Identity Style Guide correctly to promote visibility.
- Establish standardized communication steps, a writing style guide and train communication department designees to ensure messages are written and conveyed in a consistent voice.
- Establish core messages, frequently asked questions around services, Council goals and priorities that can be shared and repeated to demonstrate unity and consistent customer experience.
- Recommend annual refresher courses on the County's customer service expectations for County employees and possibly County contractors, again to demonstrate unity and consistent customer experience.
- Develop social media campaigns around the core messages and coordinate with other County departments. (An example of a successful social media campaign is around the Pandemic, launched by the State of New Mexico. Messages were strategically launched at specific times,



through different platforms – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram—and through different State Departments, using the same images, messages, hashtags.)

- Utilize QR codes and URLs on the County promotional items (e.g. mugs, facemasks, pens, etc.) so the recipient can learn more about the County or specific County services, initiatives, programs, or events. Directing audiences to the website, social media, or a community calendar which also supports the County’s sustainability goals by keeping everything digital.

## 1. REVIEW, UPDATE, AND MEASUREMENT PROGRESS AND SUCCESS

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CPR staff will review the Plan every year for its best practices, effectiveness, and relevance to Council goals. It will assess what is working, what is not working and what adjustments need to be made.

CPR staff will measure the progress and success through quantitative and qualitative metrics. It will track metrics to evaluate (see page 27) communication efforts and effectiveness to guide future programs and projects.

There are a variety of metrics, which will be used to track the success of the County's communication methods. The CPR staff will evaluate quantitative metrics listed on the following pages on a regular basis and compare them to previous statistics to understand what methods are working well and which need improvements, refinement, or further implementation.

Qualitative metrics are more challenging to monitor. They include changes to behavior, attitude, and awareness. While these results provide a better understanding of outreach effectiveness, they can only be captured through surveys such as the 2020 NCS™ Report. CPR staff will include questions in future community surveys to gauge whether citizen perceptions are improving as it relates to trust in County government.

## QUANTITATIVE/QUALITATIVE METRICS

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CPR staff will determine appropriate benchmarks and goals to be reviewed quarterly for quantitative measure, and biennially for qualitative measures. Results will be assessed upon the annual review of the Plan to determine whether the Plan is effectively achieving its objectives.

### **QUANTITATIVE**

**E-NEWSLETTERS** *(How effective are the e-newsletter communications and how can they be improved.)*

- **Subscribers:** The number of people who have signed up to receive the communication.
- **Open Rate:** The average percentage of recipients who open the email or notification.
- **Click-Through Rate:** The average percentage of recipients who click on an active link within the email or publication.

**WEBSITE** *(How effective is the website in how it is organized, are citizens finding the information they are looking for, and what information is most important to them.)*

- **Unique Visits:** The number of distinct individuals visiting the site.
- **Page Views:** The number of times a page on the site has been viewed.
- **Top Pages:** The pages visited most frequently – the top 5-10 should be tracked regularly.
- **Bounce Rate:** The percentage of people that navigate away from the site after only viewing one page. A lower bounce rate means that people are exploring the page and finding the information they need.
- **Search Terms:** The more frequently a term is searched, the more likely it is that visitors are not finding what they need and suggest it may need to be displayed more prominently.

**SOCIAL MEDIA** *(How effective are the social media posts and campaigns, and how can they be improved.)*

- **Followers:** The number of people who subscribe to and follow the County's pages.
- **Engagement:** The number of people who interact with the County's pages including likes, comments, tags, or shares.
- **Reach:** The number of people who saw the County's posts.

## **OTHER METRICS**

- After implementation of MyCivic 311 and Tyler Notify apps –
  - Quantity of and types of community issues
- Event and forum attendance

## **QUALITATIVE**

Qualitative measures will be assessed through periodic surveys with a third-party vendor or other survey instrument. Effectiveness of the Plan will be gauged based on improving the County’s citizen perceptions to the following metrics from the County’s 2020 survey results. The goal is to increase the percentage of residents that trust and engage with the County but to also have a higher percentage than the national benchmark for similar communities.

## **TRUST**

- County is acting in the best interest of the community,
- County is honest,
- County is open and transparent,
- County informs citizens about issues, and
- County welcomes resident involvement.

## **ENGAGEMENT**

- Contacted the County for help or information,
- Contacted an elected official,
- Attended a local public meeting,
- Watched a local public meeting,
- Campaigned, or advocated for an issue, cause, or candidate,
- Volunteered time to some group or activity, and
- Voted in the most recent election.

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## **Exhibit A: Audiences**

Recognizing the County is diverse (more than 20 County departments and divisions that provide a myriad of services with different missions for internal and external customers) descriptions below are kept generic. The following is provided as a reference to assist in identifying the right audience, the strategic message, and the ideal communication and listening mechanisms.

- Internal County departments and subsets
- Los Alamos citizens and subsets
- Los Alamos businesses and subsets
- Regional, state and national entities
- Commuters (living in neighboring communities – individual who commute to Los Alamos Monday through Friday to work at Los Alamos National Laboratory, Los Alamos County, etc.)
- Businesses outside of community – doing business with LANL
- Tourists and visitors
- Developers/investors/potential new businesses

## **Exhibit B: Types of Messages**

Recognizing the County is diverse (more than 20 County departments and divisions that provide a myriad of services with different missions for internal and external customers) descriptions below are kept generic. The following is provided as a reference to assist in identifying the right audience, the strategic message, and the ideal communication and listening mechanisms.

### **Internal Communication**

#### **Community/Non-Community-Based Communication**

##### **Day-to-Day Communications**

1. County services provided,
2. How the County is focused on improving the community,
3. How interested individuals can communicate/engage.

##### **Project/Event Specific Communications**

1. Communicate the who, what, where, when, why and how of the project or event,
2. Include logistics and impacts to the public,
3. Incorporate Council goals and priorities.

##### **Crisis Communications**

4. Inform/facts,
5. Mitigate panic,
6. Provide direction/guidance.
7. Dispel rumors

##### **External Community Communication**

8. Promote County activities, museums, parks, events to tourists/visitors
9. Promote business opportunities, low utility rates, low taxes to potential new businesses

## **Exhibit C: Communication Channels**

Recognizing the County is diverse (more than 20 County departments and divisions that provide a myriad of services with different missions for internal and external customers) descriptions below are kept generic and are not meant to be all inclusive. The following is provided as a reference to assist in identifying the right audience, the strategic message, and the ideal communication and listening mechanisms.

**Traditional Media (Local/Regional):** Press Releases, Media Advisories, Interviews, Opinion pieces

- Paid advertisement (print and digital)
- Printed newspaper insert

**Printed Collateral:** Printed marketing assets such as flyers, brochures, reports, signage, direct mail, bill inserts.

### **Website**

**Intranet and Main Distribution Email** (internal messages for County staff)

**Public Service Announcements/Video:** Utilizing social media and the website in the absence of the Reel Deal Movie Theater

**Pod Casts:** In the absence of the local KRSN radio station, pod casts may be a way to fill this need. Sharing pod casts on social media or the county's website.

**Social Media Platforms:** Consider the demograph group of the audience that is being targeted to determine which platform is better suited to push messaging: Facebook, NextDoor, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit, LinkedIn, YouTube, Tik Tok and SnapChat (to name a few).

### **Email Outreach**

- E-newsletters
- Email distribution lists or Listserv (e.g. Horse Stable Association, DPU customers)

**LANL Bulletins (emailed)**

**Chamber Bulletin (email addresses) to reach business community**

**LAPS Newsletter to Parents**

**FYILosAlamos.com (master calendar)**



### **Emergency Outreach Channels**

- CODE RED (reverse 9-1-1)
- Call/Text-em-all
- Electronic message board (Traffic & Streets/LANL)

### **Public Meetings (in-person or virtual)**

### **Town Halls (in-person or virtual)**

## **Exhibit D: Listening Mechanisms**

Recognizing the County is diverse (more than 20 County departments and divisions that provide a myriad of services with different missions for internal and external customers) descriptions below are kept generic and are not meant to be all inclusive. The following is provided as a reference to assist in identifying the right audience, the strategic message, and the ideal communication and listening mechanisms.

**Public Meetings (in-person or virtual)**

**Town Halls (in-person or virtual)**

**Council/Board Meetings**

**Farmers Market and Other Event Booths**

**Public Comment Cards**

**Email Designated to Collect Feedback**

**Letters to the Editor**

**Social Media Direct Messages and Posts**

**Surveys**

**Open Forum**

**MyCivic 311 and Tyler Notify apps**

CPR staff will work with County department directors and staff to support soliciting citizens' suggestions and feedback, where appropriate, when the County is developing policies, procedures, and programs. Additionally, CPR staff will work with department directors and staff to improve responsiveness to citizen input.